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*American Colonial Government, 1696-1765.* A Study of the British Board of Trade in its relation to the American Colonies, Political, Industrial, Administrative. By OLIVER MORTON DICKERSON, Ph.D., Professor of History, Western Illinois State Normal School. (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company. 1912. Pp. 390.)

WHEN we consider that no scholar would think of writing on French or Spanish colonial history without thoroughly familiarizing himself with the system of central organization and control in France and Spain, it is surprising that the idea of investigating the organs of British control, before dealing with our colonial history, seems never to have occurred to any of our older writers. The first published records of a British executive body have appeared only within the last four years, and the first printed work treating exclusively of a British organ is that which is the subject of this review.

The appearance of Dr. Dickerson's account of the organization, functions, and work of the Board of Trade has brought to an end a period of waiting for a work that has been conspicuously and urgently needed. As long as the career and influence of the one directing agency in England that had under its supervision affairs relating to trade and plantations remained little more than a name, American history in its earlier phases was bound to be in large part a tale of individual colonies or a topical account of unrelated activities. Colonial history thus treated lent itself readily to over-detailed descriptions and to exaggerated estimates of many features of colonial life that future historians will relegate to the background. Under the older form of treatment no proper point of view could be obtained whence colonial events could be seen as identical phenomena grouped by their connection with a **common** governing authority, and no adequate opportunity could be found for that comparative study of all the colonies, without which estimates and valuations can never be accurately determined. To understand at least three-quarters of the incidents and happenings of colonial history demands that we view them from the standpoint of Great Britain; the remaining quarter is open to interpretation in the light of the rise of an American republic and nation. Needless to say, the ratio has been more than reversed in the past.

Dr. Dickerson has written a history of the Board of Trade from its establishment in 1696 to the year 1765, a date, it may be observed, which has no special significance as far as the history of the board is concerned. He has presented his subject in all its aspects, dealing with the organization and personnel of the board, its relation to other departments of administration, the difficulties it encountered in administering colonial affairs, the features of its imperialistic policy, its treatment of colonial legislation, and its policy toward boundaries, trade, defense, and Indian affairs. His range is wide and his survey is practically complete, as far

as the distribution of subordinate subjects is concerned. He has omitted nothing of prime importance, though occasionally his allotments of space are open to criticism. The relations of the board with other departments might have been presented at much greater length, while his discussion of the Privy Council committees, the results of which were anticipated quite independently two years ago, might have been reduced to a paragraph.

The writer has done his work exceedingly well. He has searched patiently the Board of Trade papers and entry books, the register of the Privy Council, and the Newcastle Papers in the British Museum. He has also made effective use of the printed material on this side of the water. His attitude is that of the careful and cautious scholar, his judgment on men and affairs is sound, and his insight into the nature and tendencies of colonial control in England is in the main clear and true. His description of the Board of Trade, taken in conjunction with Miss Clarke's recent essay on "The Board of Trade at Work" (*AM. HIST. REV.*, XVII. 17), throws light into places hitherto dark, and gives life and reality to an institution that has never had in the past much meaning to students of our history. He makes it abundantly clear that the board had a definite policy and one that might have been effective had it been sustained in high quarters. Even in his incomplete statement of the relation of the board to the other departments, he is able to indicate many defects of co-operation and mutual support. The failure of Parliament, the executive and ministerial authorities, and the minor departments and boards, to act in unison is one of the most striking features of British administration at this time.

I think that Dr. Dickerson has misunderstood and therefore exaggerated the board's "subordination" to Newcastle, and has construed the periods of the board's efficiency in terms rather of authority than of mere activity. Except in the matters of appointment and of correspondence, both of which were within the range of his regular business, Newcastle's interference, though annoying, curtailed but little the legal functions of the board. I cannot find that Newcastle ever drafted a governor's instructions. The board could protest vigorously against his attempt to control appointments, and the Privy Council could order the board peremptorily to communicate directly with itself, which was not only the "common practice" (p. 109), but the only proper practice. The board, not a division of the secretary's department (p. 107), was never a committee of the council (p. 81), even when first organized, nor was it ever invited to attend cabinet meetings (p. 111), for the committee of the whole council was never the "cabinet council" (p. 85). The board made many reports that were not specifically called for (p. 47), and certainly was not accustomed to send the names of all colonial councillors to the Bishop of London for his approval (p. 124). In a number of minor particulars Dr. Dickerson has made exaggerated or mistaken statements, as in saying that many colonial governors "had no intention of doing

anything more strenuous than drawing their salaries", that there was no packet service till 1755, that Rhode Island ever sent over her laws for inspection, that governors' vice-admiralty commissions came directly from the Admiralty, or that conflict between a colonial law and the law of England was considered sufficient ground for repeal. But most of these slips must be passed by, as they count for little against the genuine merits of the work.

The most serious blunder lies in the choice of a title. The work has nothing to do with "American Colonial Government". The contents are accurately expressed only by the subtitle. It is a pity that the author has not carried his subject to 1782, for he has omitted an extremely interesting and important period in the history of the board.

CHARLES M. ANDREWS.

*The First American Civil War: First Period, 1775-1778, with chapters on the Continental or Revolutionary Army and on the Forces of the Crown.* By HENRY BELCHER, Rector of S. Michael-in-Lewes, Sussex. In two volumes. (London and New York: The Macmillan Company. 1911. Pp. xxiv, 350; viii, 364.)

THIS work is plainly written as an antidote to Trevelyan and other "Whig disciples of Clio", to use Mr. Belcher's own phrase. It seeks "to probe the weakness and the futilities of the Bancroft school of history". But why this second operation after the one so skillfully performed by Sydney George Fisher? It suggests incompetent diagnosis. We are only moved to mirth like that of the Swedish hero of a well-known modern fable. The whole work is argumentative in character and not historical either in spirit or construction. The author has not searched for the truth so much as for facts with which to confound the Whigs. Truth is desirable as an ornament, but sarcasm is indispensable. American ancestors, he declares, figure in American histories "as clad in shining garments and with features not merely deftly coloured, but enamelled with chipless enamel". Yet when he wishes to establish unpleasant facts about America's past, his particular joy is to convict the Americans out of their own mouths by quoting Roosevelt, Lodge, "Professor Sloane, of Princeton", and Sydney George Fisher, whose book is a perfect gold-mine for this seeker after Yankee defects. Mr. Belcher has a fine nose for the carrion of Whig outrages, and his researches in this direction are remarkably complete if not critical. His use of history for argumentative purposes leads to digressions worse than those of *Tristram Shandy*. Although the second volume brings the history down only to the close of Burgoyne's campaign, yet the treaty of peace appears on page 23 of the first volume. Up and down American history he rages from Pocahontas to Roosevelt seeking facts to support his adverse opinions. After the siege of Boston, he brings the scene of the war to New York by going back to the Stamp Act, and coming on for a time,